

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 SAA-01 SES-02 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /093 W
-----107744 261221Z /53

R 251329Z AUG 78
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1609
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 2370

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PROR, PINT, IS, JO, XF
SUBJ: PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS

1. POLOFF MET AUGUST 24 WITH "ASH'AB" COLUMINIST JAMIL HAMMAD, WHO IN JANUARY SERVED AS AN UNOFFICIAL CONTACT BETWEEN THE EGYPTIAN DELEGATION TO THE PEACE TALKS AND SELECTED WEST BANK PALESTINIANS. HAMMAD HAD RECENTLY RETURNED FROM TRAVELS TO EUROPE, TUNIS, LIBYA AND EGYPT.

2. HAMMAD SAID HE EXPECTED NO MORE FROM CAMP DAVID THAN A CONTINUATION OF THE PEACE PROCESS. THE THREE PARTICIPANTS SHARED THAT COMMON INTEREST AS DID SAUDI ARABIA.

3. ASKED FOR A REALISTIC SCENARIO FOR WEST BANK/GAZA PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS, HAMMAD STATED THREE PRE-CONDITIONS: FIRST, JORDAN INVOLVEMENT, WHICH WOULD APPEAR AS BOTH AN OPPORTUNITY AND A THREAT; SECOND THE PLO ACQUIESCENCE AS A RESULT OF SAUDI PRESSURE; THIRD, STRONG US SUPPORT. EVEN IF PLO CRITICISM
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WAS NOT ENTIRELY SILENCED, OVER A LONG RUN LOCAL PALESTINIANS COULD WITHSTAND LOW-LEVEL ATTACKS PROVIDED THE US SUPPLIED MORAL SUPPORT AND MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT DID NOT SECRETLY PREFER THE PLO. SUSPICIONS THAT THE US ACTUALLY PREFERRED PLO PARTICIPATION LINGERED AND DISCOURAGED LOCAL INITIATIVES, HAMMAD SAID.

4. WITH THOSE CONDITIONS MET, HAMMAD COULD ENVISION SOME THREE OR FOUR PALESTINIANS AS PART OF A JORDANIAN DELEGATION. AS LIKELY CANDIDATES, HE MENTIONED AZIZ SHIHEDEH (AS REPRESENTATIVE OF CHRISTIANS), RASHID SHAWWA (GAZA), BIR ZEIT PROFESSOR WASIF ABBOUSHI (THE NORTH) AND THE HEBRON MAYOR FAHD QAWASIMA (THE SOUTH).

5. CARE SHOULD BE TAKEN TO AVOID SELECTING DELEGATES LIKE ANWAR AL KHATIB WHO MIGHT BE ACCEPTABLE TO ONE PARTY, I.E. JORDAN, BUT CLEARLY UNACCEPTABLE TO ANOTHER, I.E. THE PLO. HAMMAD WAS NOT SURE YOU COULD GET THE ISRAELIS TO PLAY STRAIGHT. HE SUSPECTED THEY MIGHT ARRANGE FOR EXTREMISTS, LIKE RAMALLAH'S MAYOR KHALAF, TO SABOTAGE THE PROCESS.

6. WITH SUCH DELEGATES AS HE MENTIONED, HAMMAD SAID HE WOULD PUBLICLY SUPPORT THE PROCESS. ASKED IF "AL FAJR" AND "ASH'AB" WOULD DO SO, HAMMAD EXPRESSED DOUBTS, BUT DISMISSED THEIR EDITORIAL LINES AS UNREPRESENTATIVE OF PUBLIC OPINION.

7. COMMENT: WITH THE CLOUD OF "AL FAJR" EDITOR JOE NASSER'S DISAPPEARANCE STILL HANGING OVER HIS HEAD, HAMMAD'S ENDORSEMENT OF WEST BANK PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS WOULD NOT CARRY GREAT WEIGHT WITH "NATIONALISTS." HIS CANDIDATES STRIKE US AS REFLECTIONS OF PERSONAL PREFERENCES AND WEAKER, ESPECIALLY IN THE NORTH, THAN NECESSARY TO COMMAND BROAD SUPPORT. ON THE OTHER HAND, HIS POINT ON PUBLIC ATTITUDES
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TOWARD THE OLD JORDANIAN RETAINERS STALWORTHS IS WELL TAKEN.
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Message Attributes

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